

Dear SIC Members and Supporters:

This issue of *SIC Clips & Quips* (Volume 5, Issue 7) is sent to call attention to information of special interest to School Improvement Councils, their members, and other stakeholders.

It's Not Too Late to Register to Attend the SC-SIC 2013 Annual Meeting – School Improvement Councils are marking 35 years of service to South Carolina's public schools and communities this year. Do you want to join in the celebration? Then register today to attend the 2013 SC-SIC Annual Meeting on **Saturday, March 23, 2013**. Themed "SICs – 35 Years of Insight, Impact and Innovation," the Annual Meeting, to be held at St. Andrews Middle School, 1231 Bluefield Road, Columbia, will begin with registrant check-in at 9:00 a.m. and wrap up around 3:45 p.m. The day's events will acknowledge the milestone anniversary of our state's SICs with a variety of speakers and sessions of interest to local SIC members and others dedicated to civic engagement in public education. A highlight of the conference will be the presentation of SC-SIC's annual Riley Award for School Improvement Council Excellence. Registration fee for the event is just \$30.00, with conference materials, a continental breakfast and buffet lunch provided. Go online to <http://sic.sc.gov>, for additional information, a preliminary meeting agenda, and the meeting registration form. All registrations must be made and paid for in advance by check, purchase order or major credit card, and should be received by SC-SIC (via mail or fax) by **Monday, March 18**; emailed or scanned registrations cannot be accepted. So make plans to be with us on **Saturday, March 23**, for this year's SC-SIC Annual Meeting in Columbia, as we celebrate 35 years of School Improvement Council insight, impact and innovation in South Carolina's public schools!

State House Update – The South Carolina General Assembly convened a new two-year session on January 8. The House Ways and Means Committee passed an Appropriations Bill (**H.3710**) on February 21 that will be debated by the full House beginning March 11. The budget bill includes an additional \$56 million in non-recurring funds in support of education that will raise the base student cost to \$2101 from the current allocation of \$2012. While this amount falls short of the funding required by the Education Finance Act (EFA), this proposed increase is good news for the state's public schools. Of note for School Improvement Councils in **H.3710** is the creation of the Center for Educational Partnerships (CEP) within the College of Education at the University of South Carolina. This proposed Center would include the SC School Improvement Council. The CEP would roll up all Education Improvement Act (EIA) funds currently allocated to the programs under its purview and could mean a much needed increase in funding for SC-SIC, enabling the office to improve service delivery to the more than 1,100 SICs statewide. The Senate began hearing testimony regarding education funding on March 6. Below are a few of the education bills of interest:

- **H.3474** – Would give districts the flexibility to build school calendars based not on the number of days in school but on the number of hours of instruction.
- **H.3237** – This bill would put a school resource officer in every school. Debate has been adjourned on this bill which would require the state to hire about 700 more SROs and it also requires that the bill go into effect seven days after passage.
- **S.128** – Would create a Division of Interscholastic Athletics in the SC Department of Education. If passed the new Division would have the effect of replacing the current SC High School League.
- **S.313** – This bill is very similar to a bill passed by the House a few years ago that would provide for school choice within public school districts and a pilot program for open enrollment across district lines. The bill passed out of subcommittee and is headed to the full Senate Education Committee.
- **S.291** – Would reauthorize the First Steps to School Readiness legislation with some changes.
- **S.279** – This bill would create a tuition tax credit system in South Carolina that would provide tax credits for parents sending their children to private or home schools.

These are only thumbnails of a handful of bills currently filed in the SC General Assembly. You are encouraged to visit www.statehouse.gov to learn more about these bills and others in which you may be interested. While there you can visit the "Citizen's Interest" page and sign to receive email alerts about specific bills and committee meetings that you wish to monitor. You may also be interested in a class sponsored by the State Library that will teach you how to follow legislation. Visit our website at

<http://sic.sc.gov> and scroll down the homepage to learn more. The SC-SIC staff is always willing to help you learn how to be an active participant in education policy issues. Please contact us if your district would like to schedule advocacy training for School Improvement Council members.

Want to Learn More About the Legislative Process? – There's a class for that! The South Carolina State Library will be hosting a free "Tracking Legislation" class, **Tuesday, March 19**, from 9:30 a.m. to Noon, in the State Library's Computer Room, 1500 Senate Street, Columbia. This class is designed to familiarize users with ways to follow the process of legislation, look at resources to find legislators, track bills, and find laws and statutes for both South Carolina and the U.S. You will learn about the South Carolina Legislative Research website (scstatehouse.gov) and other resources for state and county information. You can also learn to familiarize yourself with thomas.gov and FdSys for federal resources, as well as DISCUS (South Carolina's Virtual Library) for resources to help with news and analysis. This is a good class for high school and/or college students, teachers, state employees or anyone who may be interested in following particular laws or bills on a state or federal level. Just click on the following link to register: <http://scstatelibrary.evanced.info/signup/EventDetails.aspx?EventId=127&lib=0#>.

2013 South Carolina State Schools of Character Announced – The Palmetto Character Council has announced that three South Carolina schools have been named State Schools of Character and three others have received honorable mentions for their excellence in character education. Each year, the Palmetto Character Council selects schools and districts that demonstrate, through a rigorous evaluation process, that their focus on character development has had a true positive impact on academic achievement, student behavior, and school climate. Being named a State School of Character is a preliminary step to being recognized as a National School of Character by the Character Education Partnership (CEP). The 2013 South Carolina State Schools of Character are: **Mt. Gallant Elementary School**, Rock Hill (Rock Hill District 3); **Round Top Elementary School**, Blythewood (Richland District 2); and **Wren Elementary School**, Piedmont (Anderson District 1). 2013 Honorable Mention recipients are: **St. Joseph's Catholic School**, Columbia; **Oakview Elementary School**, Simpsonville (Greenville County Schools); and **Delmae Heights Elementary School**, Florence (Florence District 1). For more information about State and National Schools of Character and how schools can improve through high-quality character education, visit www.character.org or contact the Palmetto Character Council at palmettoccsc@gmail.com.

Remember, *SIC Clips & Quips* is sent to all SIC members and supporters who share their email addresses with us. Please feel free to print out and share this information with fellow SIC members who may not have received it. We are here to help you, so please contact us any time!

Tom

Tom F. Hudson

Associate Director

SC School Improvement Council
at the USC College of Education
803-777-7658 ----- 800-868-2232

"Civic Engagement in Public Education"

